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From Clarence Blair Mitchell

July *19* 41

Compliments

Clarence Blair Mitchell

MITCHELL-BOULTON CORRESPONDENCE
1787 - 1792

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1787-1792

RELATIVE TO COINAGES FOR SOUTH CAROLINA
AND THE UNITED STATES

PRIVATELY PRINTED

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FOREWORD

THE following correspondence has been printed solely for the purpose of preserving a small incident in American history. In after years such incidents often throw light on more important events.

To Arthur Westwood, Esq., Master of the Assay Office at Birmingham, I am indebted for duplicates of correspondence recorded in the letter books of Matthew Boulton.

Clarence Blair Mitchell

December 1931

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IT IS difficult to realize in these days the political problems and economic difficulties connected with a debased coinage which so seriously troubled statesmen in England and the Colonies towards the end of the eighteenth century. At that period the coining of British money was laboriously done by hand presses in the Tower of London, and the coins issued entirely lacked the sharp and uniform appearance to which we are now accustomed. As a result counterfeiting was carried on to an enormous extent, and in the case of copper coinage had flooded the market with debased metal. In spite of the death penalty for counterfeiting which still existed, it is estimated that in the middle of the eighteenth century no less than half the copper coinage was counterfeit, and the same situation applied in a lesser degree to the more precious metals.

William Pitt, the younger, who, at the age of twenty-four, had become Chancellor of the Exchequer, First Lord of the Treasury, and Prime Minister, breaking all records in English politics, was greatly concerned over the extent of counterfeiting, and took up with his friend, Matthew Boulton, a prominent manufacturer of Birming-

ham, then or afterwards High Sheriff of Staffordshire, the problem of coining by steam. Boulton's long struggle in partnership with Watts to produce a steam engine that could profitably be applied to manufacture, had been crowned with success. His factories at Soho, on the outskirts of Birmingham, gave employment to hundreds of hands. He was, however, far more than a mere manufacturer. He was keenly interested in raising the English standards of applied art. His agents traversed all Europe in search of esthetic designs. His hospitality was no less famous than his commercial success, and his home, Soho House, was said by a writer of the time to resemble rather a hotel than a private dwelling. Here on one occasion, the twenty-first birthday of his son, seven hundred people sat down to dinner. Here met such men as Priestly, Boswell, Darwin, Small and Sir Walter Scott. Nor was the reputation of Soho House confined to England. Boulton writes to his London agents: "I have French and Spaniards today, and tomorrow I shall have Germans, Russians and Norwegians."

In 1787 a Charlestonian named John Hinckley Mitchell, then twenty-two years of age, had gone to England like many young South Carolinians of that period to complete his education and broaden

his knowledge of the world. Under what circumstances he came in contact with Boulton is not definitely known, but he was a visitor at Pitt's home in London (where he found working as a footman a former slave of his father's), and the meeting might have occurred there. On the other hand, there is some ground for believing that through his mother's family, the Hinckleys, he may have been connected with Boulton. There were branches of the Hinckley family long established in the neighborhood of Birmingham, and in an endorsement by Boulton on one of Mitchell's communications, he is referred to as "Hinckley" Mitchell, indicating that he was associated in Boulton's mind with that family. At all events, he was frequently at Soho House, and it may have been at Boulton's suggestion that he conceived the plan of furnishing his native State with a new copper coinage. He contemplated, however, a visit to a Mr. Savary, Treasurer and Superintendent of the French mint at Douai, which would indicate that his idea was independent of Boulton's influence.

It was to gratify Pitt's wishes to "put an end to the counterfeiting of money" that Boulton had turned his attention to coining. When Mitchell first met him, Boulton had succeeded in applying

steam to this purpose, thus revolutionizing the art.

The earliest of Mitchell's letters to Boulton, which has been preserved, indicates that plans for a copper coinage for South Carolina were already under way, and that Boulton had made certain suggestions which Mitchell was considering. The letter, which is dated London, August 13, 1787, reads as follows:

London,
13 August 1787.

Dear Sir,

Your favor of the 10th instant I received on Saturday evening and am considering the contents. I have taken the liberty of requesting that you will send as early as possible the Specimen of the Company Coinage but as the ship I mean to send my dispatches by will positively sail this day, Sat. night, if it was possible to have a few impressions struck with the Arms of the State I should be very happy, but if it cannot be done and sent to London by that time, then I shall send the Governor and Assembly the Company Coin for their satisfaction as a Specimen of what can be executed for them, and I am sure they will be well pleased with the workmanship, but much more were they to see their own Arms executed by such able and skilful Artists. You see by this, Dear Sir, that I have this undertaking much at heart, and as I have no doubt of success, I shall spare no expense, time or trouble to forward it, being fully convinced it will tend to our mutual advantage. I have called on Mr. Matthews but he was not at home, but I

shall certainly do myself the pleasure of calling again. I beg my best respects may be presented to Miss Boulton and the ladies. I remain, with great esteem,

Your much obliged,

John H. Mitchell

Excuse great haste.
Matthew Boulton, Esq.,
Soho, near Birmingham.

On August 25, 1787, Mitchell writes Governor Pinckney enclosing his proposals, and sends the letter by Seaman Deas, Esq., a passenger on the *Olive Branch.*

To His Excellency Thomas Pinckney, Esquire,
Governor and Commander in Chief of the State
of South Carolina, &c., &c.

Sir:

Having been informed that Mr. Borell has declined his engagement with our State for supplying them with a Copper Coinage, for the Paper Medium, I have taken the liberty of addressing your Excellency on the subject, and at the same time have enclosed my proposals for furnishing the State with £20,000 or a greater sum, if required. I have not the least doubt the same confidence will be placed in me, as in a foreigner—particularly when my character and connections are enquired into—of which my Father-in-Law, Mr. Abercromby, as well as many gentlemen of the Honorable House of Assembly can fully testify.

Your Excellency will please to observe that I can with confidence assure you of my fulfilling every engagement I may have the honour of making with the State, and will give any security which may be required for that purpose.

As perhaps it may prove more agreeable that my offers should be accompanied with a specimen of my intentions, I have the honor to enclose for your Excellency's and the Honorable General Assembly's inspection, some copper money, intended as a new coinage for the East Indies. This will show the skill and ingenuity of the artist, who is, without exception, equal to any in Europe, and which same person will execute the coinage now proposed by me —should it meet with approbation. But I also beg leave to notice to your Excell'y that the coin for our State will not only be much superior in quality and goodness to the India coin, but equal if not superior in every respect to the half-pence coined at the Tower of London. I had intended to have transmitted to your Excell'y a few half pence struck on purpose—with the arms of the State of South Carolina —as a more proper specimen of my intentions, and had taken measures for that purpose, but had not sufficient time to execute them before the vessel sailed which conveys this to your Excell'y.

I must also beg leave to remark to your Excell'y that the Copper British Coin at present in circulation in South Carolina, is not generally understood. It is not of the King's Coinage at the Tower of London, but a base mixed metal, or imitation called here counterfeits—of little or no value— made on purpose by persons who run the risk of the law by so doing, and which base money is bought by persons of every description who come to America, for the purpose of passing them as current.

I trust your Excellency will excuse the trouble I give you on this occasion, but from a knowledge of your Excellency's sentiments for the welfare of our State. I am induced to hope the proposals will meet with your Excellency's approbation, as I am well convinced it will prove very beneficial and advantageous to my country, and I flatter myself, reflect no discredit on me.

I, therefore, beg leave to request that your Excellency will be so obliging as to lay the enclosed proposals, with the specimen, before the Honorable General Assembly at their first meeting. Should they be agreed to, the Assembly will then determine on what impression, motto, &c. they may wish to have struck on the coin, which must be particularly explained in as legible and distinct a manner as possible. . . . I hope your Excellency will pardon me for requesting you will let me have as speedy an answer as possible to this business. Having been so long absent from Charles Town, I wish to return home, as my private affairs require me immediately,—but will defer doing so until I have the honor of hearing from your Excellency, which I request may be addressed to me at the Carolina Coffee House, Birchin Lane, London.

I have the honor to be

Yr. Excelly most obedt & most hbl servt,

John Hinckley Mitchell

London, 25 August 1787.
Sent by Seaman Deas, Esq.,
per the Olive Branch.

Mitchell's proposals which accompanied his letter read as follows:

Proposals made by John Hinckley Mitchell to the Honbl General Assembly of the State of South Carolina for furnishing the said State with £20,000 of Copper money.

First. The said John Hinckley Mitchell doth hereby promise and agree to deliver, in the City of Charleston, free of any expense whatever to the Governor, Treasurer or any other person that may be appointed for that purpose, the sum of £20,000 in a copper coin (or a greater sum if required) on the several conditions hereafter mentioned.

2dly. The said sum of £20,000 to be coined in half pence, to be made of fine pure copper, unalloy'd, with milled edges, each half penny to be equal in quality, goodness and weight to those coined at the King's Mint in the Tower of London, with a finer impression and in every respect better coined.

3dly. The half pence shall be impressed with whatever device the Honorable Assembly may think proper to fix upon.

4th. The said sum of £20,000 shall be delivered to the persons appointed to receive the same, in the several sums of one, two, three or five thousand at each time, at the rate of £1000 per month or £5000 in three months, at the option of the General Assembly, and as they may think proper to order, provided that vessels sail in due time for each respective delivery. Otherwise at every opportunity that offers to convey the same.

5th. The said John Hinckley Mitchell hereby agrees to receive the Paper Medium of the State of South Carolina in return or payment of the said copper coin—the said half pence to be reckoned at and after the rate of 24 to 1 shilling sterling, as usual.

6th. The said John Hinckley Mitchell, or the agent he may authorize for that purpose, shall at the delivery of each sum of copper money, immediately receive the same sum in the paper medium of the State of South Carolina, from the person who may be appointed to deliver it, by the Honorable General Assembly.

Lastly. The said John Hinckley Mitchell engages to fulfill all and every of the above conditions, faithfully and punctually—provided they are approved by the Honorable General Assembly—and has no doubt of the terms and conditions being faithfully executed on their part.

John Hinckley Mitchell

London, 25 August 1787.

On the sixteenth of October following, he writes Governor Pinckney again, forwarding the letter by Isaac Mott, Esq., on the *Cumberland*.

To His Excellency Thomas Pinckney, Esquire, Governor
and Commander in Chief of the State of
South Carolina, &c. &c.

Sir:

I hope you will excuse the liberty I have taken in addressing your Excellency a second time on the subject of the copper coin, but since I had the honor to transmit my former letter to your Excellency, per favor of Seaman Deas, Esq., I am enabled to send your Excellency a further specimen of Coin which cannot be equalled by any artist in the world.

The French crown which I here enclose to your Excellency is made in a different manner from the India Coin, which I have already sent—tho' both executed by the same person. The French crown is reckoned to be the finest piece of workmanship ever executed, as it is struck in an entirely new and ingenious machine, which has the property of striking any inscription on the edge, with the letters either in relief or intaglio, or both at the same time, and gives a polish to the ground of the money, altho' the blank piece be not so . . . .

I therefore beg your Excellency will be so good as to lay this letter, with the enclosed piece of money, before the Honorable House of Assembly, and once more request (should my proposal be accepted) that the device, inscription, &c., may be explained in as plain and distinct a manner as possible, and also whether the edges of the coin

shall be milled, or any letters be struck thereon in the same manner as on the French Crown.

I have the honor to be
Your Excellency's most obedt. and most humble Servt.

John Hinckley Mitchell

London, 16th October, 1787.
Copy of the Original
sent by Isaac Mott, Esq., per the Cumberland.

While Mitchell was awaiting in England an answer to his proposals, events had taken place across the Atlantic which were to render such proposals useless so far as the State of South Carolina was concerned. The bitter contention in the Philadelphia Convention between advocates of two opposed theories of government had at last been settled by compromise. The new Constitution had been perfected, and among the many attributes of sovereignty which it took from the several States was that of regulating coinage.

On February 13, 1788, while on a visit to a family named Beresford at Fladbury, Worcestershire, Mitchell wrote to Boulton, as follows:

Fladbury, Worcestershire,
13 February 1788.

Dr. Sir,

I am sorry I could not be in town this day to speak to you on the business of the Coinage. However, as I shall be in London on Friday before twelve, I shall be happy to

meet you at the Carolina Coffee House[1] between seven and eight o'clock, when I shall be glad you could have ready the papers you were to let me have. In the interim, I remain, with my best regards to Mr. and Mrs. Matthews and Miss Boulton,

Your much obliged humble servant,

John H. Mitchell

I think to sail for Charleston on Monday or Tuesday next.

Matthew Boulton, Esq.,
6 Green Lettuce Lane,
Cannon Street, London.

Mitchell's sailing was evidently delayed until March 12, as appears by his next letter to Boulton dated from Charleston May 6, 1788.

Charleston, So. Carolina
6 May 1788

Dr Sir,

This will inform you of my safe arrival here after a pleasant passage of fifty-four days—and I have embraced the earliest opportunity of informing you concerning the Copper Coinage, as I waited on the Governor the day after my arrival, who informed me that my proposals were read to the House of Assembly and the French Crown shown them which met entirely with their approbation. But they could do nothing in the business until the new Constitution was either adopted or exploded—which cannot be ascertained until the Convention has met to consider of it, which was appointed to be the thirteenth of the next

[1] Situated in Birchin Lane off Cornhill and near the Bank of England. The street has changed little since Colonial days, and the location of the coffee house can be approximately determined. The latter was a great gathering place for Carolinians.

month, so that I cannot expect an answer before the middle of July, which as soon as I receive shall transmit you. I have established myself in the Mercantile business in this City—and trade is pretty brisk, and goods at a remarkable high price. I have wrote to Mr. Matthews by this conveyance—with an order for some merchandise, which I should be glad could be sent as soon as possible, and I make not the least doubt but a firm connection between himself and me will prove mutually advantageous. I should be exceedingly happy, if agreeable to you, to continue our friendship and correspondence, and in anything I can be of any use or service to you or any of your friends in this country, be assured I shall be exceedingly happy. I have ordered my negroes in the country to look out for a pair or two of Summer Ducks, which as soon as they are caught, shall send them as a present to Miss Boulton, if she will honor me with the acceptance of them. I hope I shall have the pleasure of frequently hearing from you of the health and welfare of yourself and family, as nothing can give me greater satisfaction. I must request that you'l excuse me not writing more fully as I have so much business to settle after so long an absence from home that I have not a moment to spare. With my best respects to Miss Boulton, I remain, with the greatest esteem,

Your most obliged and obdt. srt,

John H. Mitchell

Matthew Boulton, Esq.,
Soho, near Birmingham,
Great Britain.

Per Ship Britannia,
2 D. C.

In September Mitchell journeyed to New York in order to discuss with President Washington

a coinage for the United States. Washington apparently gave him encouragement, for immediately on his return to Charleston he again writes Boulton on October 9 via the ship *Mexico*, and to insure as early an answer as possible repeats his letter the next day by the ship *Mary*.

Charleston,
9 Oct. 1789

Dear Sir,

Being just arrived from New York—the seat of Government of the United States—and having had a conference with Genl. Washington, the President of the United States, respecting a general Coinage for the Union—I have to request of you as a favor that you will be so obliging as to favor me with the rates you could furnish two hundred thousand pounds, one-third copper, one-third silver, one-third gold coin, payable in the coin of Great Britain, as I have the preference of supplying Congress with their first Coinage. I think we can do it on as good terms as any person whatever. The amount of the Coinage will be shipped to London before the delivery of the new Coinage. I beg you to be very plain and explicit, which I have not time to be, as I am this moment arrived and the vessel for London leaves this place this moment, but very next will explain myself more fully, I beg of you to mention particularly every circumstance about furnishing the above sum. With my best compts to Miss Boulton and Mr. and Mrs. Matthews, I remain

Your much obliged friend and humb. servt.

John H. Mitchell

The money must be all made in two years before this date. If your terms suit I shall ship you on the first information two thousand barrels of rice and a quantity of indigo.

Matthew Boulton, Esq.,
Birmingham,
Warwickshire, Great Britain.
(himself immediately)
Per *Maria Dennison*

Charleston, S. Carolina
10 Oct. 1789.

Dear Sir,

I wrote you my last in such a great hurry that I am afraid you will not be able to make it out. I had just that moment returned from New York and had not two minutes notice before the vessel sailed for London. This is to request of you to let me know by the first opportunity your terms for supplying the Congress with Gold and Silver and Copper Coinage, as they meet the first Monday in January, and what length of time you would require to furnish the sum of two hundred thousand pounds for the first coinage, as they see the impracticability of coining in America when they can get it so much better made in Europe and cheaper. I should be very glad you could be as plain and concise as possible as if the terms you send should be approved they will agree with me. On the delivery of the coinage the amount will be paid in London. I hope this may suit you as if the first coinage meets with their approbation there is no doubt but we may have the coinage business of America for some years, which may be very advantageous to us. Should be glad of an answer as soon as possible.

With my best compliments to Miss Boulton, permit me to subscribe myself

Your friend,

John H. Mitchell

Matthew Boulton, Esq.,
Birmingham.
Per S. Mary.

Boulton replied to these letters on November 25.

Soho, Birmingham, 25 Novr. 1789

Dear Sir,

Your favors of the 9th & 10th Octr. have just come to hand & though this Letter will not be a full Answer to yours, yet I think it better to send you a short general Answer instantly than to run the risk of any Delay.

The first question you ask is at what rates I could furnish £200,000 of Coin—viz. 1/3 Copper, 1/3 Silver, & 1/3 Gold, payable in the Coin of Great Britain—Previous to my mentioning any price or terms, I think as we live at so great distance from each other, & as many delays & Inconvenience may arise from the want of being open & distinct on either side. I therefore desire it may be understood that I will at one word come to the point, & quote you the lowest price, & in all things explain myself without reserve, but it will be necessary for your better understanding the subject that we divide it into 2 parts—viz.

1st. The Mechanical operations of Rolling, Coining &c. &c.
2nd. The Mercantile part which relates to the purchase of the Gold, Silver & Copper

1st. As to the Mechanical part, I can decidedly say that no Country or Persons can do it so well or so cheap as I can, for I have expended upwards of £7000, in the inventing, executing & perfecting an Apparatus for Coining far superior to all other coining Machines both for expedition & other perfections which no

other Coin possesses: My primary Object was to put an end to the counterfeiting of Coin in all Countries (read the paper I send herewith)

Whether the Metals are delivered to me at a low or a high price the expence of Coining will be the same & therefore suppose Copper delivered to me in the crude state of Cakes I then take & 1st Roll it hot into Sheets.

2nd, Anneal, pickle & scour it bright & free from Scale & Dirt—

3rd, Cut it into fillets of a proper breadth for the pieces intended to be Coined

4th, Fine Roll it cold in fine polished Steel Rollers exactly to a certain thickness which is difficult—

5th, Cut it out into blanks by a new Method

6th, Anneal

7th, Clean, polish & bring it to a fine surface & Colour by sundry Operations

8th, My Dies are engraved by the first Artist in that line in Europe

9th, My Apparatus for striking the Edges at the same blow with the faces & is new & singularly ingenious—

10th, Coined by a Press on a new principle & worked more regularly by one of my late improved Fire Engines than can be done by the power of Men.

11th, Wrapped up in Paper ready for the Cask—

These are the Outlines of the Operations & my lowest Price will be as follows

1st. For hot rolling into Sheets
2nd. Cutting into Fillets
3rd. Annealing, pickling, cleaning
4th. Cold Rolling in fine polished Rollers

} £14 pr. Ton the price our Copper Companys charge for rough hot rolling only, but as it takes 3 Ton of Sheets to make 2 Ton of Money, so the Rolling &c. will cost for One Ton of Money.....£21

N.B. I charge nothing for the wast & remelting of the Scissel or Scrap Copper which is worth nearly £3 per Ton.—

For all other Operations as mentioned (above) pr. Ton	21. —
A small allowance of ½d. pr. lb. for my expence in Tools, Mills & Machines as well as including unavoidable loss of Copper Casks to pack the Coin will Cost pr. Ton £1.	2.6.8.
Freight pr. Canal to the Severn & then to Bristol	1.6.8.
5d. per lb. or pr Ton	£46.13.4

But if carried to London by Land, it will Cost from £4 to £5 pr. Ton, instead of £1.6.8, or if from Soho to Gainsborough or Hull & from thence by Sea to London, about £3—a Ton.

The Mint in the Tower of London hath always paid full as high a price for hot rough Rolling as I charge for it & fine Cold Rolling; by which I attain a greater exactness in size as well as a much finer polish & finer impressions.

The King pays £42 a Ton for the barbarous Copper Coinage in the Tower; He also finds & repairs the Presses & all other Machines. He also pays the said Coiners certain Sallaries over & above the £42 a Ton. He also finds them all with Houses, Fire & Repairs with sundry other permanent general expences which in all amount to upwards of twelve Thousand pounds sterling pr. year, even if there is not a single Guinea or half-penny Coined—Hence it will be far more economical for the States of America to contract with me who have an Apparatus already erected that can Coin all they want in the time you mention. Thus I

reckon the price of Coining my fine Money less than half the Cost of the King's barbarous Money of the Tower.

Now Sir, to the above Sum you must add the cost of the Copper in cakes or Crude Masses, & I am sorry to say that the price raised £10. pr. Ton since you were in England, as the demands for it from most of the European States hath increased very much, as well as the Sales to our East India Company who purchased 3000 Ton of the united Copper Company. in July last at 79 & £80. for the Cake, since which time it is risen to £86 to the Manufacturers, but I know how to get it for £84—& at this time it cannot be got lower; however it would be well if you or any of your American friends could employ some of their friends in London to try to get it lower, but I fear it is not to be done —I am therefore willing to contract for any quantity of Copper Coin for 14d. pr. lb. delivered in Bristol without charging either *Casks* or Carrge. or putting you in advance of Money for the purchase of the Copper, as I will use my own Money for that purpose, but I must upon shipping exchange Money for Money.

Hence it will be necessary for you to send Indigo, Rice, Corn or Tobacco or any other Commodities either to me or to Mr. Matthews or any other Merchant in London to be sold on your Account & for the best price such Commodities will bring at our Market.

It will also be necessary that you (in Conjunction with General Washington or such Persons as may be appointed) fix upon a proper Device & proper inscription. I saw a design for an American Half penny with a Sun Dial on one side with a Motto, mind your Business—& on the other a Chain with 13 Links.

This device is easily copied by a moderate Artist, but if there was on one side the Head of General Washington or a beautiful Female Figure representing in proper attributes the 13 United States, it would not only be a handsome

piece of Money but it would be more difficult to copy, particularly if an inscription was struck upon the Edge, as there is no Artist in England capable of doing that, or engraving such a Figure as the Britannia which my Artist hath nearly finished for the intended British Coinage, but the Dies being not yet hardened, I cannot send one at present, However you will see by those I have sent the stile of Workmanship.

It is the interest of America to attend to the principles mentioned in the paper I have sent you herewith, & by leaving but little temptation for Counterfeiters, & throwing many difficulties in their Way, is the only sure means of preventing great quantities of counterfeit half-pence from being sent from Europe to America.

I cannot help advising you to be perfectly explicit with General Washington, or such members of the Congress as you may have the honor of conversing with; there is no doubt but they will make you a proper allowance for your trouble; and if you think proper to mention my Name, I refer them to Dr. Franklyn whom I have had the pleasure & the honor of being acquainted with for 30 years past.

It will be necessary that you lose not a moment in this business & that it be brought to a conclusion as soon as possible that I may arrange my own time & Business properly, for besides the British Copper Coinage, I am now in treaty with some other European States for the conduct of the whole of their Coinage, but I am determined not to undertake more than I can do; however I am now willing to contract for the whole quantity you mention & execute within the time.

I can equally excel in the Gold & Silver Coin, but I have not (considered) or calculated at what price I can do it, however I can positively say that I can make it a much finer Coin, & at a much lower price than any other State in Europe hath yet done. I am obliged to set out to London

tomorrow & fear I must delay entering into the Gold & Silver Coin untill my return which will be about the 6th Decemr. & then you may depend upon hearing from me distinctly on that Subject.

Please to take a Copy for yourself of my Paper upon Copper Coinage & then present it & also some of my Specimens, & my most respectful Complts. to the truly great & Honble. General Washington—Wishing him & your States & yourself Prosperity & Happiness, I remain with great Regard

Dear Sir

Your most faithfull & obliged
& Obed. hble. Servt.
(not signed)

P.S. I have recd. orders from our Privy Council to make a Specimen of a new Guinea upon a Construction which I have proposed shall not be so liable to have its Weight diminished by use & that will be much easier detected if (?wanting) in Weight or Specific Gravity.

I recommend an Elegant figure to represent the United States by any Dress or Attributes that may be thought proper, perhaps it might be approved if she held fast in one hand 13 Arrows—& for the Reverse, suppose there was a Chain of round links with the Arms of the 13 Provinces in the 13 Links. This I submit to the President or Members of the Congress, but I advise at all events that all your Money, both of gold & Silver & Copper be struck in Collars like those I have sent you, by which they will be perfectly round & of equal Diameter, & without which they will be neither round nor of equal diameter. Nor will the inscription be distinct or well defined. As to the inscription round the edge, it may be in Letters indented or in relief, the latter will be rather the neatest.

The sample coins were dispatched to Mitchell via New York on the packet *Tankerville* as appears from the following letter to Boulton from his Quaker correspondent in Falmouth.

Falmouth Decemr: 7. 1789

Esteemed Friend

Not knowing where to address thee in London We acknowledge receipt of thy A. C's favor 2 Inst & to inform thee that we have entrusted the small box he has forwarded to the care of Capt. McDonough of the Tankerville Packet bound for Newyork, under cover to our frds Wm Constable Esqr & Co. & requested them to forward it P first opportunity to John H. Mitchell of Charleston & wrote this Gentleman P the Mail the needful, the Carriage 4/10d. the freight postage included, we shall debit T. Wilson—

Your Albion Mill Co. address'd some Ships here last summer with wheat, wch, hadst thee been with them, we doubt not but wou'd have been consign'd to us for their ordrs, instead of our Neighbors—We have now considerable ordrs for purchasing this article; therefore if you expect any Cargoes & will please to give your directions to T. Wilson or any other Gentleman to treat with us for them its probable we shall be able (to) give you a good price—the paiment will be made quite agreeable to the Company, by bills on London

It will on all occasions give us pleasure to be usefull to thyself & frds Being respectfully

They assured friends

Geo. C. Fox & Sons

Mattw. Boulton Esqr
Birmingham

The specimens were not received by Mitchell until the following March, owing to the *Tankerville* having been fourteen weeks at sea between London and New York. He sent the coins to Congress with a letter, and again proceeded to New York to present the matter personally.

He writes Boulton on March 14 as follows:

Dear Sir,

Your favor of the 5th Novr. 1789 has not until this moment come to hand owing to the uncommon long passage of the ship which brought it, having been out fourteen weeks from London, the contents of which and the Specimen Coins shall be immediately laid before Congress, and hope it will meet with their approbation, as the present new Government is an efficient one and able to carry on and be punctual to an engagement of the kind. There is a paper in your letter which you several times refer me to I have not received. I suppose it was not sent through mistake. Your terms shall be sent to Congress to-morrow, and in the course of a fortnight will proceed on myself to see if I cannot bring the business to a conclusion. People of all denominations are anxious for a Copper Coinage as there is not a halfpenny in circulation in the United States, nor no less a piece than one-sixteenth of a dollar, which passes for four pence sterling. Rice sells here at ten shillings per hundred, tobacco fifteen shillings, indigo from one to three shillings per hundred. You shall hear from me particularly as soon as Congress is made acquainted with your terms. In the mean time I shall be glad to receive such further instructions as you may be pleased to give me. As I have a number of friends in Congress who have promised me their interest and support in this business I am in hopes shall be able to settle it to our satisfaction.

But as I am in a manner but a third person in this business, it will be necessary to know what reward I am to expect—for my trouble—when the money is exchanged for the coin, as I cannot expect anything from Congress. As I am certain to have the preference and the whole management of contracting for coin for the United States, will be glad if you will inform me by the first opportunity what you will allow me for every thousand pounds paid you for the new coin at the rate you have mentioned and I hope shall soon receive your terms respecting gold and silver coins also. Congress has been offered a considerable loan in Holland—out of which they propose paying for the coinage to be paid on the shipping of the coin. Public faith is fully restored in America under our new Government and the establishment of a National Bank is under contemplation in Congress which will be of great use to the mercantile interests—and I hope that before a long period our country will make a conspicuous figure among the nations of the world.

If you think proper to ship any articles of the Birmingham manufacture here I shall be very happy to sell them on commission for you, or if you would send me an assortment of them to the amount of 1200 or 1500£ I would take them on my own account and send you the returns in rice and indigo on the return of the vessel which may bring the goods. Merchandises in general sell well here, particularly hardware, and if you are inclinable to try some of your articles I make no doubt I shall render you satisfaction as I shall be extremely happy to form a connection with you which I am sure will be attended with mutual advantages.

With my best compliments to your amiable daughter believe me to remain,

Your obliged friend and humble servant

John H. Mitchell

Matthew Boulton Esq.
Soho
Will be much obliged if you will send me one of your copying letter presses, with the price, as I am much in need of one.

Mr. Tucker, one of the Congressmen from South Carolina, laid Mitchell's proposals, with the specimens sent by Boulton, before the House on April 7. The House referred the matter to the Secretary of State, and on April 14, 1790, Thomas Jefferson made the following report:

> The Secretary of State, to whom was referred by the House of Representatives, the letter of John H. Mitchell reciting certain proposals for supplying the United States with Copper Coinage, has had the same under consideration, according to instructions, and begs leave to report thereon, as follows:

The person who wishes to undertake the supply of a Copper Coinage, sets forth, that the superiority of his Apparatus and Process for coining enables him to furnish a Coinage better and cheaper than can be done by any Country or person whatever; that his Dies are engraved by the first Artist in that line in Europe; that his Apparatus for striking the edge at the same blow with the faces is new and singularly ingenious; that he coins by a press on a new principle and worked by a Fire-Engine more regularly than can be done by hand; that he will deliver any quantity of Coin, of any size and device, of pure, unalloyed Copper, wrapped in paper, and packed in Casks ready for shipping, for fourteen pence sterling the pound.

The Secretary of State has before been apprised from other sources of information, of the great improvements made by this Undertaker in sundry Arts: he is acquainted with the Artist who invented the method of striking the edge and both faces of the Coin at one blow; he has seen his process, and Coins, and sent to the former Congress some specimens of them, with certain offers from him, before he entered into the service of the present Undertaker (which Specimens he takes the liberty of now submitting to the inspection of the House as proofs of the superiority of this method of Coinage in Gold and Silver, as well as Copper:)

He is therefore of Opinion,

That the Undertaker, aided by that Artist, and by his own excellent Machines, is truly in a condition to furnish Coin in a state of higher perfection, than has ever yet been issued by any Nation: That perfection in the engraving is among the greatest Safeguards against Counterfeits, because Engravers of the first Class are few, and elevated by their rank in their Art, far above the base and dangerous business of counterfeiting: That the perfection of Coins will indeed disappear, after they are for some time worn among other pieces, and especially where the figures are rather faintly relieved as on those of this Artist; yet their high finishing, while new, is not the less a Guard against Counterfeits; because these, if carried to any extent, must be ushered into circulation new also, and consequently may be compared with genuine Coins in the same state: That, therefore whenever the United States shall be disposed to have a Coin of their own, it will be desirable to aim at this kind of perfection. That, this cannot be better effected than by availing themselves, if possible, of the Services of the Undertaker and of this Artist, whose excellent Methods and Machines are said to have abridged as well as perfected the operations of Coinage. These Operations, however, and their expense being new and unknown here, he is unable to

say, whether the price proposed be reasonable or not. He is also uncertain whether, instead of the larger Copper Coin, the Legislature might not prefer a lighter one of Billon, or mixed Metal, as is practised with convenience by several other Nations: a Specimen of which kind of Coinage is submitted to their Inspection.

But the propositions under consideration suppose that the Work is to be carried on in a foreign Country, and that the implements are to remain the property of the Undertaker; which conditions, in his opinion, render them inadmissible, for these reasons.

Coinage is peculiarly an Attribute of Sovereignty. To transfer its exercise into another Country, is to submit it to another Sovereign.

Its transportation across the Ocean, besides the ordinary dangers of the Sea, would expose it to acts of piracy by the Crews to whom it would be confided, as well as by others apprised of its Passage.

In time of War it would offer to the enterprizes of an enemy what have been emphatically called the Sinews of War.

If the War were with the Nation within whose Territory the Coinage is, the first Act of War or Reprisal might be to arrest this Operation with the implements and Materials coined and uncoined, to be used at their discretion.

The Reputation and Principles of the present Undertaker are Safeguards against the abuses of a Coinage carried on in a foreign Country, where no Checks could be provided by the proper Sovereign, no Regulations established, no Police, no Guard exercised, in short none of the numerous Cautions hitherto thought essential at every Mint; but in hands less entitled to confidence, these will become dangers. We may be secured indeed, by proper ex-

periments as to the purity of the Coin delivered us according to Contract, but we cannot be secured against that which, though less pure, shall be struck in the genuine Die, and protected against the vigilance of Government, 'till it shall have entered into Circulation.

We lose the Opportunity of calling in and recoining the clipped Money in circulation, or we double our risks by a double transportation.

We lose, in like manner, the resource of coining up our Household plate in the instant of great distress.

We lose the means of forming Artists to continue the Works, when the common Accidents of a Mortality shall have deprived us of those who began them.

In fine, the carrying on a Coinage in a foreign Country, as far as the Secretary knows, is without example, and general example is weighty Authority.

He is therefore of opinion on the whole,

That a Mint, whenever established, should be established at home: That the Superiority, the Merit, and Means of the Undertaker will suggest him as the proper person to be engaged in the establishment and conduct of a Mint on a scale which, relinquishing nothing in the perfection of the Coin, shall be duly proportioned to our purposes.

And in the mean while, he is of opinion, the present proposals should be declined.

(Signed) Thos. Jefferson
April 14th. 1790.

True Copy.
Attest,
John Beckley, Clk. H. R.

Mitchell, not having as yet been advised of Jefferson's unfavorable report, wrote to Boulton in a hopeful mood on April 25.

Charleston, S.C.
25 April 1790

Dear Sir,

This will inform you that I yesterday received a letter from Mr. Tucker, a member of Congress from this State, acquainting me he had laid your proposals and specimens on the 7th instant before the House; that the proposals were much approved of and the coin thought to be truly elegant and unequalled, and that the House had referred it to the Secretary of State for his opinion and report thereon, which should be known in a few days, and then would be taken up in the House, the issue of which he would inform me; that it was the opinion of most of the members that Congress would contract for the copper coin immediately. I hope, therefore, my next will inform you of the whole business being settled to your satisfaction.

In consequence, will be glad if you will inform me particularly what allowance you will make me for my procuring the preference and trouble I shall have in the business. When we once get the contract for the copper coin and give satisfaction in that, I make not the least doubt we shall have the management of the whole of their coinage business and there is a great field open in America for that business as we have no coin whatever of our own and it seems to be the general wish to have one.

I hope, therefore, Sir, you will be open and explicit with me on the subject, As I know you to be a man of true honor, will leave it entirely to your own generosity. As I am very certain that I shall be appointed contractor for the coin of the United States, so that by a firm, good and close connection between us will prove to be mutually advantageous. I expect by the next opportunity to hear particularly from you on Gold and Silver coins.

With my best respects to your good daughter, Miss Boulton, believe me to remain

Your obliged friend and humble servant

John H. Mitchell

Matthew Boulton, Esq.,
Soho;

On May 4, 1790, Boulton acknowledged Mitchell's letter of March 14 as follows:

To Birmingham 4th May 1790

John H. Mitchell, Esqr.
Charleston So. Carolina

Dear Sir,

I began to think it long before I received an answer from you, but I am just relieved by the reception of your esteemed favour of 14th. March.

I sent you duplicates of my Letter of 25th. Novembr: by two different Vessels, the one was the packet, and have no note of the Name of the other, and in one of them only, was the paper I mentioned—However I now inclose you a Copy of it.

My great object hath been to make Money that cannot be counterfeited with any advantage to the Counterfeiter, and I have succeeded to my wish, being perswaded that no person in Europe can make such halfpence as I have sent neither as to workmanship Price, or Expedition, as I have now an Apparatus capable of executing Two Hundred Million of Guineas in one year. I am particularly engaged today with some Gentlemen from Cornwall, and if this Letter is not sent off in a couple of Hours it will not be in time for the present packet; I therefore cannot enter into the particulars relative to the Gold and Silver Coin in this letter, any further than to say, that I beg to be considered as a

mere Coining Machine, and if Congress will furnish me with Bars of Gold and Silver I will Coin it for them much finer, more expeditiously, and cheaper, than any other person in Europe.

I am desirous they should have every possible satisfaction they can propose, or wish for, in respect to the Standard of both Gold and Silver, wishing they would deliver the Bars ready alloyed. However have no objection to giving all the advice and assistance upon that subject in my power.

If the American Government cannot make up their Minds upon the Copper Coinage from the specimens and price that I sent to you, I fear it will be vain to enter into all the Minutia relati (ve) to Gold & Silver, I therefore wish you would endeavour to obtain some conclusions upon the Copper, and the sooner it is done, the better; For Copper hath risen, and continues to rise in price, in this Country, so that the common selling price is now £86. P. Ton; But, it is probable, it may be had at £84. if ordered very soon— You ask what reward you are to have. I wish you had asked that Question before I wrote my last Letter, and told me what you expected, I would have added it to the Terms that I then proposed. But I made my Calculation to go as low as possible; and you will observe by my last that I referred you to the Government for your allowance.

From repeated Experience I have long ago made up my mind never to ship goods to be sold on Commission; But I will send you by the first ship a Copying Machine and a small set of patterns by which you may make an experiment and try to obtain orders, and form a better judgment what is most likely to answer for a regular Trade—And experience is the best ground to extend it upon. A Mr. Jarvis (who was in London at the time you were there) said He had a patent from Congress and a Contract for making all their Money in America; But it is not in his power to do what they want, and ought to have. I have not heard of

Him lately. Pray learn what He hath done, or is about doing, as I hear He is expected every day in England.

The expences of establishing a Mint are very great, Those in France stand the State in more than £100,000 Sterling P annum. The English Mint in London stands our Government in more than £12,000—P. year, even if there is not one single Guinea or Shilling Coined. I mean £12,000 P year over and above the price paid for Moneying, which is nearly double what I have fixed in my proposals. It therefore appears to me self evident that it would be most expeditious, and more economical, to employ me for the present, and in a very few years I should be glad to assist in establishing such a Mint in America as would be sufficient to Coin for the whole Continent.

My son is in Saxony, but will return soon; And my daughter is at Home in Health, and thanks you for your kind remembrance she joins with me in every good wish for your Health & prosperity.

I am with great regard

Dear sir
Your very Obedt. & H'ble Servt.
Matt. Boulton

On May 10, 1790, Mitchell having received Jefferson's report, wrote Boulton and suggested the possibility of the latter establishing a mint in the United States.

Charleston
10 May 1790

Dear Sir,

In conformity to my promise, I have taken the earliest opportunity of sending you the Report of the Secretary of State on your proposals, which you will observe are unfavorable. I received them two days ago from a member of

Congress, who says the elegance of your coinage is admitted and admired by everyone. They wish much for the establishment of one of your coining machines in America, as a coinage is much wanted indeed. If you thought it practicable to establish one of your machines here, you may be assured we shall get the conducting of the whole of the coinage business in this country. You will be best able to judge of whether it will suit you.

If you have any thought of doing it, if you will send me your terms and conditions particularly specified, they shall be immediately laid before Congress and by empowering me to make the contract, I will have it immediately settled and nothing shall be wanting in my power that can be done for your interest.

You will much oblige me by an answer on this business as soon as possible, and I hope you will make it suit you to make them such proposals as will not be declined.

With my best compliments to your worthy daughter, Miss Boulton, believe me to remain

Your obliged friend and humble servant,

John H. Mitchell.

Matthew Boulton, Esq.,
Soho.

He writes Boulton again on July 20.

Charleston, So. Carolina
20 July 1790

Matthew Boulton, Esq.
Dear Sir,

Your much esteemed favour of the 4th May ult. with the enclosure per New York packet I received two days ago and am happy to hear of the health and welfare of yourself and family. You have no doubt ere this received the report of the Secretary which I am sorry was so unfavorable.

I received a letter a few days ago from the Speaker of the House, who wishes much for your opinion respecting the establishment of a mint in America. They are all very much in favour of your new method of coining. A late New York paper pronounces your coin to be far superior to any ever coined in the world. You will be best able to judge whether it even would be practicable to set one of your machines in this country under the sanction of Government. You desire me in your letter to make inquiry after a Mr. Jarvis, which I have accordingly done, and find that he had contracted with the old Congress under the old Constitution to furnish them with a certain sum in copper coin within a certain limited time but he not being able to fulfill the contract, it of course became non-valid and at present there is no contract subsisting between Congress and any person whatever relative to coining.

Nor either has there been made any other application than your own, on that head—You mention your intention to me of sending some of your patterns of goods for orders. I make no doubt whatever to be able to obtain some for you, the money payable in England on the delivery of your goods. Then indeed after seeing your patterns, I may be able to judge what will suit this market and will import a small quantity myself.

My best wishes attend yourself, daughter and son, to whom be pleased to make my respects, and I remain, with the greatest esteem,

Your most obedient and humble servant,

John H. Mitchell.

Addressed to: Matthew Boulton, Esq.,
Birmingham
Per Ship Sovereign
Capt. Benn.

On October 8, he wrote Boulton along the same lines at the instance of the South Carolina Congressmen then at home on recess.

Charleston
8 Oct. 1790

Dear Sir,

Your favor of the 5th July ultimo I have just received and also a copying machine and the patterns, all safe, per the Ship *Powhatan*. The machine I have just fixed and it works very well, the amount of which I shall either transmit you in a bill or most probably I shall ship Mr. Matthews a barrel of rice when the crop comes in, to be sold on my account. I am much in want of a good correspondent to sell my rice and to ship goods for me. The patterns I have well examined and if you send me a small assortment of the plated goods (see the enclosed memorandum) at nine months' credit, and also of your buttons, as it is impossible to receive the goods and remit sooner, I will take them, but not at a shorter credit. A number of other articles of hardware I am in want of, such as locks, hinges, bolts, spades, hoes, axes, hammers and such like articles, a small assortment of which I would take on the same terms. The rice I will ship to Mr. Matthews, the proceeds of which I wish him to purchase Manchester woolens and linens. If you can ship the articles I have wrote for, the sooner the better. The white metal buttons and fancy are very salable here, but the steel will not do here at all.

The members of Congress from this State are all here during the recess of the House and have begged of me to write you if it was possible to fall on any plan to establish a mint in America under your direction. I should have wrote more fully but am just this moment going to the country.

With compliments to Miss Boulton and your son, believe me to be

Yours hst.

John H. Mitchell

A number of gentlemen have seen your patterns and I believe shall get several orders for you, payment of which will be made on the delivery of the articles in London. In anything that I can be of use to you, pray command me.

J. H. M.

When the establishment of a Government Mint in the United States had finally been determined upon, Mitchell again wrote Boulton.

Charleston, S. Carolina
4 April 1792

Dear Sir,

I have not had the pleasure of hearing from you a length of time, neither have I wrote you lately, having been for some time in the country on some business.

I suppose you know that a resolution has been passed by Congress for the establishment of a mint in the United States and I believe that by what the President of the United States told me some time ago that the French gentleman that was with you is engaged in the direction of it.

As I shall have occasion to send some produce in three or four weeks to London, I shall enclose you an order for the amount of your copying machine, which I ought to have settled some time ago.

The bearer of this, Mr. Jack, goes to your place on business. He is a worthy, good man, and the most eminent jeweler in this city or in America. Any civilities shown him

will be obliging me, and I shall be happy in paying any attention to any of your friends coming this way. In the meantime, believe me to be

Your obliged friend and humble servant,

Matthew Boulton, Esq.,
Soho, near Birmingham
per favor of Mr. Jack

John H. Mitchell.

To this letter Boulton replied as follows:

November 5, 1792.

Mr. John H. Mitchell
Dear Sir,

I avail myself of this opportunity to acknowledge the receipt of your favor of the 4th April last by the hand of Mr. Jack, of your city. As Mr. Jack happened to come to Soho upon a general holiday, he promised to favor us with a call upon his return from Scotland, but I presume he took another route. I was the more desirous of it as I conceived such a connection might have been mutually useful, but as I understand Mr. Jack is connected with my friends, Messrs. Russell, I hope to supply him through that channel with some articles of my manufacture.

This offer will, I hope, be delivered to you by my nephew Mr. Lecheyas Walker, who for the first time of quitting home goes to America as the agent of Messrs. Russell. If he should stand in need of your advice or assistance, I am persuaded you will give it to him, or any other service or civility you can render him, I shall consider as done to myself, or any recommendations, introductions or confidence you may place in him I hold myself answerable for,

as I have a full reliance upon his prudence and integrity. If you have not remitted for the copying machine, etc., please to pay it to Mr. Walker, and his receipt will be equally good with my own.

I agree with Mr. Jefferson that the coinage of money is one of the attributes of sovereignty and ought to be done in every great State, but I have considered America as a new-born child that needed doddering strings before it could walk and my offer was to furnish them. I offered to make to you any quantity of copper coin you might want instantly, even to help you in erecting a mint and rolling mill and in the coining of that money in the presence of any artist that the State might send over. He would thereby become a check upon and have notion(?) of my work and he might have returned with all the machinery ready made with the knowledge of erecting and using it, with some other arts not commonly known and such as would have enabled your country to have coined such money as could not easily be counterfeited. But I now understand they have got some process from a French gen'l that you will find will not produce money either so well manufactured or so cheap as what I should have enabled you to have done. It is true you may get your dies engraved by several artists at Paris as well as they can be done anywhere, but all the ten mints in France can't strike so many pieces per month or per year as I can do in one hour in my mint and how will you prevent impressions from being taken off such dies as are engraved at Paris before they are sent to America and thereby make such counterfeits as can't be detected, all of which I could have enabled a competent artist to prevent. I have lately struck 200 tons of copper money for France, of which Mr. Walker will give you a specimen of each, and when your new mint hath made any new money I will thank you for a specimen.

Wishing you and America health and prosperity, I remain, with great regard, dear Sir,

Your faithful and obedient friend and servant,

Matt. Boulton

My poor friend, Mr. Matthews, is dead.

The French can make neat specimens but not one hundred tons per month, as I can do.

This letter ends the correspondence. Jefferson not only established an All-American mint but was responsible for the adoption of our decimal system of coinage with its enormous saving of time and trouble in trade and banking.

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